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ABSTRACT

The nationwide study examines career behavior patterns and work orientations of students five years after they began vocational-technical transfer programs at community colleges, technical schools, and similar kinds of institutions in the fall of 1970. The study sample consisted of 4,350 individuals selected from the national norm group who completed the American College Testing Career Planning Program. Sample members were both males and females chosen according to their original enrollment in one of the following eight programs: business and marketing, accounting, science, social science, arts and humanities, electrical engineering technology, auto mechanics, and nursing. An overall response rate of 60% was achieved. The results indicated that: of those students who completed an educational program, a very high percentage are employed in occupations related to their programs; students generally tend to gravitate toward jobs related to their educational program; with several exceptions, most individuals employed in occupations related to their programs felt they could not have obtained their present job without postsecondary education; and those employed in occupations related to their educational programs are highly satisfied with their present occupations with the majority indicating that they would enter such a program again if they had to do it over. (JR)

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A Five-Year Follow-Up of Students Enrolled in Post-Secondary Vocational-Technical-Transfer Programs

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A Five-Year Follow-Up of Students Enrolled in
Post-Secondary Vocational-Technical-Transfer Programs

The use of post-program follow-up studies has traditionally been an integral part of educational research. Recently, however, follow-up research has received a special emphasis due to accountability concerns brought to public attention through economic and cultural factors during the late 1960's.

The purpose of this study is to examine career behavior patterns and work orientations of students five years after they began vocational-technical-transfer programs at community colleges, technical schools, and similar kinds of institutions. Specific topics, as related to this purpose, are as follows:

1. What has happened to individuals who began vocational-technical-transfer programs at community colleges, technical schools, and similar types of institutions in the Fall of 1970?
   a) For those who finished programs, are they employed in occupational areas related to the program they completed? Are they employed in areas unrelated to their completed program? Are they unemployed?
   b) For those who did not complete a program and did or did not go on to 4-year programs, are they employed in occupational areas related to the program they completed? Are they employed in areas unrelated to their completed program? Are they unemployed?
   c) For those who are still enrolled, are they enrolled in a program (2 or 4 year) related to their original program? Are they enrolled in a program unrelated to their original program?
2. Final Educational Program as Related to Occupational Experiences and Plans.
   a) Did individuals who completed educational programs, or who spent at least four months in a program before leaving school, initially take jobs related to these programs?

b) Do they currently hold jobs related to these programs?

c) Is their expected occupation in three years related to these programs?

3. Current Occupations Related to Programs Completed: Did Postsecondary Training Make a Differencce?

a) For individuals who are presently employed in occupations related to the educational programs they completed or spent at least four months in before leaving school, could they have obtained the job without education beyond high school?

4. Current Occupations Related to Programs Completed: Are Students Satisfied With the Job and Would They Go Through the Same Program Again?

a) For individuals who are presently employed in occupations related to the educational programs they completed or spent at least four months in before leaving school, are they satisfied with their job?

b) Would they go through the same educational/training program again?

Procedures

Sample

The follow-up sample (N = 4,350) was selected from the national norm group who completed the ACT Career Planning Program (CPP). The CPP is a guidance assessment instrument developed to help students make better-informed career decisions and plans. Its major components include ability, interest, and experience scales as well as sections of job choice, educational plans, job values, and working condition preferences.

The norm group (N = 22,342) completed the CPP as they began vocational, technical, and transfer programs at 110 community colleges, technical schools, and similar kinds of institutions during the fall of 1970. Follow-up sample members were chosen according to original educational programs in which they were enrolled. Eight programs were selected. Males and females were jointly selected

from the following programs: Business and Marketing; Accounting; Science; Social Science; Arts and Humanities. Males were selected from Electrical Engineering Technology and Auto Mechanics and females were selected from Nursing.

Follow-Up Instrument

The survey instrument was developed to include individuals' educational/vocational decisions, experiences, and plans as related to their vocational-technical-transfer programs. The preliminary version was pre-tested with students at an eastern community college, revised on the basis of this pre-test, administered to students at a midwest technical college, revised again, and a final pre-testing was done with students at a midwest junior college. Follow-up items include the following: employment history since leaving the program, future employment plans, particular and overall indices of job satisfaction, perceived level of work related to training program, educational history, and a "Would you do it over again?" question.

Follow-Up Procedures and Response Rate

Survey mailings to individuals, mailings to institutions for address updates, and phone calls to non-respondents were conducted from late January to early June, 1975. Survey packages included a cover letter, survey instrument, and return business reply envelope. The first survey package mailing was followed 17 days later by a postcard reminder. A second survey package was mailed three and a half weeks after the postcard reminder and a third survey package was sent four weeks after this. These mailings were sent to students' last known addresses (half had been updated in 1972 and half were original addresses from 1970). When a survey was returned because the individual had moved and no forwarding address was available, the survey was mailed to that person's parents, if their address was different from the student's address. Parents were then asked to forward the survey to the student. By late February, over 800 survey packages were returned to ACT with no forwarding addresses available for either students or parents. Lists of these individuals were mailed to the institutions

(N = 98) where they had been enrolled for an address update. By late March, 83 of these institutions returned rosters with 231 valid current addresses. Mailing procedures, similar to those described above, were employed. By early May, when all mailing procedures had been completed, phone calls were made to all non-respondents, many of whom were not listed in the phone directory and apparently had moved. Data collected was terminated in early June.

Response Rate information and a description of the original sample are presented by program in Table 1. Table 2 includes both the overall response rate and the response rate for those with accurate addresses reported by each follow-up contact. All mailings produced an overall response rate of 45% which equalled 72% of those for whom accurate addresses were available. Phone calls added 15% to the overall response rate (increasing the rate of those that could be reached by 23%). Thus an overall response rate of 60% (N = 2,594 from 109 institutions) was achieved. This was equivalent to a reponse rate of 95% for whom accurate addresses were available.

Analyses

For each of the four topics cross-tabulation procedures were performed between individuals in each particular group studied and the criterion topic (e.g., present occupation, job satisfaction, etc.). Prior to the cross tabulations, individuals were screened for complete data (i.e., that they responded to all items pertinent to that particular analysis so that the results were not confounded by persons who had not completed one or more items relative to the particular analysis).

Results

Question one: an overview of individuals who began programs in 1970. Individuals are listed in Table 3 by completed and incompleted programs with current occupation. The ACT Job Family coding system was used to categorize occupations

into the current occupational groupings. Table A-1 provides a description of these job categories. Those in the Business and Marketing Programs mostly hold Business Contact jobs (50% of the completers) and then Business Detail jobs (23% of the completers). The vast majority of those in the Registered Nursing Programs hold nursing jobs (100% of the program completers hold these jobs!). Individuals from Accounting Programs mostly hold Business Detail jobs (72% of the completers) and then Business Contact jobs while those in Electrical Engineering Technology mostly hold Technologies jobs (62% of the completers) and then Trades jobs (22% of the completers). Greater percentages of those from Science Programs hold jobs in Technology and Trades than in Science. A large majority of those in Auto Mechanics Programs hold Trades jobs (79% of the completers and 78% of the incompleters) and the majority of those in Social Science Programs hold Social Science jobs (64% of the completers). Finally, those who were in Arts & Humanities programs are fairly spread out with almost half of the completers (45%) in either Social Science or Arts & Humanities jobs.

The degree of relationship between completed and even incompleted, programs to current occupations is also valid for the present educational programs (both 2 and 4-year) in which many students are still enrolled. For example, over half of those originally enrolled in Business & Marketing Programs are still in either 2 or 4-year Business Programs as are those who were in Accounting Programs while over two-thirds of those originally in Registered Nursing are still in this type of program. Over half of those originally in Electrical Engineering Technology Programs who are now in school are still enrolled in this type of program although only about 20% of those who were in Science are still in Science Programs with about 25% having switched to Engineering Programs. Few of those who began Auto Mechanics Programs are still enrolled. However, two-thirds of

those who were in Social Science Programs are still in these types of programs while about 30% of those who began Arts & Humanities Programs are still in these programs with another 30% having switched to Social Science Programs.

Question two: programs related to first, current, and future job

The data in Table 4 illustrate the stability or holding power of the more specific educational programs as well as the movement toward relevant employment of students who completed general educational programs. These data are based on students who completed educational programs and students who spent at least four months in a program before leaving school. Hence, these data differ slightly from the data reported in Table 3. For nearly every specific program area, students who obtained their first job in a related occupational group were still currently employed in that group. For example, 72% of the students from the Accounting educational program obtained their first job in the Business Detail occupational group; the same percentage are currently employed in that group. For students who completed general educational programs, a larger percentage are currently employed in a related occupational area than obtained their first job in a related area. Over 70% of the students who completed a program in the Social Sciences are currently employed in a related area in contrast to only 53% who obtained their first job in that area. A similar trend is evident for the Arts and Humanities students.

Several interesting trends in job mobility from first job obtained to anticipated future job are shown in Table 4. Most noticeable is the dramatic drop of 80% of the Auto Mechanics students who are currently employed in the Trades occupational group to the 64% who expect to hold a future job in that area. The data suggest that many of these people expect to hold a future job in the Business Contact occupational cluster; note the increase from 3% of the Auto Mechanics students who obtained their first job in that area to 17% who

expect to obtain a job in that area. With the exception of the Nursing and the Social Science students, there is a small but consistent trend for people to move out of a specific training area toward the Business Contact area. This movement probably represents those people who want to manage or own a business of their own.

For people who complete general programs like Social Science or Arts & Humanities there is a marked trend to eventually obtain related jobs. Many of these students evidently do not have the opportunity to enter the job market in a related occupation but three years later a higher percentage are currently employed and an even higher percentage expect to hold related jobs in the future. For people from the specific educational programs there is a tendency to move in the direction of higher paying and higher status jobs. For example, Electrical Engineering Technology students tend to move out of the Trades area and into the Technology area; Business & Marketing students move out of Business Detail into Business Contact occupational areas.

Question three: current related-program occupations and necessity of post-secondary education. The results of this question are based upon students who are presently employed in occupations related to their educational training. Students completing one of the eight educational programs, or who spent at least four months in one before leaving school, who are currently employed in occupational groups related to their particular program formed the criterion groups. Table A-1 describes the occupatonal groups and shows which ones appear related and compatible to the particular educational programs. The results of Question three are presented in Table 5. As is apparent, for no program did a majority of people feel that they could have obtained their present job without any further education beyond high school. People from two of the programs (Business and Management and Auto Mechanics) were about half positive and half negative in

their feeling that they could have obtained their present job without further training. For all other programs, the considerable majority felt that their training beyond high school had been necessary for them to obtain their present job. The Registered Nursing, Social Science, Electrical Engineering Technology, and Science Programs had high ratios (35:1, 9:1, 5:1, and 5:1 respectively) of individuals who felt that their training was necessary as opposed to those who felt their training was not necessary for them to have obtained their present job.

Question four: are those in program-related occupations satisfied and would they do it over? The same criterion groupings that were established for the analyses in Question three were also employed for this item (See Table A-1). The "satisfaction" index is based on a four response item which asked how satisfied individuals are with their current job. The responses were: very satisfied; fairly satisfied; fairly dissatisfied; and very dissatisfied. The second part of Question four was covered by the survey item which asked, "If you could do it over again, would you still enter a post-high school vocational, technical, or transfer program?" The possible responses were "yes," "no," and "I'm not sure." The results for Question four are found in Table 6. It is apparent for all eight programs that the overwhelming majority of students in occupations related to their programs are generally satisfied with their present occupations. For example, 93% of those in Business and Management, 98% in Registered Nusing, 94% in Accounting, 92% in Electrical Engineering Technology, 97% in Science, 94% in Auto Mechanics, 95% in Social Science, and 85% in Arts & Humanities all express satisfaction with their current occupation. In addition, the majority of those who express satisfaction with their present occupation would also "do over" or go through their training programs again. Those who are satisfied and "not sure" whether they would go through it again, clearly outweigh those who are satisfied but would definitely "not do it over" again. Finally, it is interesting to note that among the small number of persons who are dis-

satisfied with their current employment, the majority still would go through their training programs again.

Conclusions and Implications

This study has posed the overall question, "What are the outcomes of vocational-technical-transfer programs at community colleges, technical schools, and similar types of institutions?" The conclusions that are evident from the survey data collected five years after the students in this study first enrolled in these kinds of programs offer several responses to this question.

First, of those students who completed an educational program, a very high percentage are employed in occupations related to their programs. Even those students who did not complete the program they entered are employed frequently in closely related occupations. In addition, those that are still in school are generally in programs related to their initial program. These results raise a number of questions. Are students in some areas becoming "employable" before completing the educational programs? If students do develop the minimum entry level skills necessary to obtain jobs in some areas, are the educational programs in essence overeducating them? Conversely, should guidance by faculty and counselors be incorporated into the curriculum to alert students to the consequences of premature job entry? In any case, students do pursue and obtain occupations related to their training.

A second trend evident in these data is that students generally tend to gravitate toward jobs related to the educational program they completed, although the first job they obtained may not be directly related. For most program areas, a higher percentage of students currently hold program-related jobs than those who held first jobs that were program related. An even larger percentage expect to obtain jobs in the future that are related to the educational program they completed. Apparently, local labor market conditions may not provide the opportunity to immediately enter a related job but these people persist and subsequently obtain, or plan to obtain, jobs related to their educational program.

One might also speculate that students who invest greater amounts of time and money in completing an educational program may persist longer in seeking related employment. Perhaps a side benefit of two-year vocational-technical-transfer programs is an increased level of job motivation, at least as it relates to job entry.

The third important finding from this study concerns the perceived value of these educational programs by the "consumer." With the exception of those from the Business and Management and Auto Mechanics programs, the vast majority of individuals employed in occupations related to their programs felt they could not have obtained their present job without education beyond high school. Overall community colleges and vocational-technical schools are seen by their students as providing a valuable training experience which has indeed influenced their futures. That a majority of the graduates from two programs did not see their educational program as necessary to obtain their current jobs may reflect the nature of the job skills or degree of responsibility assigned to entry level people. In some cases, for example, a graduate from an Auto Mechanics program may work with and receive the same pay as an older worker who had received no formal training.

Finally, the data from this study suggest that those employed in occupations related to their educational programs are highly satisfied with their present occupation and the majority of them indicate that they would enter such a program again if they had to do it over. Even students who were not satisfied with their current job would still go through the particular training program again. Unfortunately job satisfaction data for the sake of comparison are not available for students who did not enter or complete a two-year educational program. One must wonder whether the educational program moderates the degree of job satisfaction or do nearly all people say they are satisfied with their job? As far as the individuals in this study are concerned, the educational program had sufficient value for them to say they would do it again.

In summary, students in vocational-technical-transfer programs do eventually obtain jobs related to their training, though not necessarily right away and the vast majority are satisfied with their current jobs. These people are quite positive about having participated in such educational programs, to the extent that they would "do it over again," and feel they could not have obtained their current job without this type of training. It appears then, that these programs produce desirable and beneficial outcomes--individuals who partly due to their training become satisfied and productive members of society.

TABLE 1

Original Follow-Up Sample and Respondents Presented by Educational Program

Educational Program	Males		Females		Total	
	Original	Respondents	Original	Respondents	Original	Respondents
Business and Marketing	336	172	136	77	472	249
Nursing (Registered)	0	0	450	316	450	316
Accounting	323	206	231	136	554	342
Electrical Engineering Technology	450	304	0	0	450	304
Science	601	380	54	26	655	406
Auto Mechanics	450	254	0	0	450	254
Social Science	277	139	450	267	727	406
Arts and Humanities	338	173	254	144	592	317
Total	2,775	1,628	1,575	966	4,350	2,594

TABLE 2

Overall and Valid Address Response Rates by Specific Contact

Contact	Overall Response Rate	Response Rate for Those With Valid Addresses	N-Counts
1st Mailing (complete survey package)	16%	25%	675
2nd Mailing (postcard reminder)	9%	14%	378
3rd Mailing (complete survey package)	12%	20%	546
4th Mailing (complete survey package)	8%	13%	351
Phone calls	15%	23%	644
Total	60%	95%	2,594

Note. A total of 2,737 individuals appeared to have valid addresses and/or phone numbers.

TABLE 3

Completed and Incompleted Programs by Present Occupation

Current[a] Occupational Group	Educational Program: Business & marketing C[b]	I[c]	Registered nursing C	I	Accounting C	I	Electrical eng. technology C	I	Science C	I	Auto mechanics C	I	Social science C	I	Arts & humanities C	I
Business Contact	50[d]	50	0	17	14	22	9	14	9	19	7	12	13	16	13	18
Nursing	0	0	100	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Business Detail	23	13	0	20	72	38	3	9	2	11	8	2	11	31	17	33
Technologies	0	8	0	0	2	6	62	39	57	18	3	8	2	2	7	13
Science	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	2	11	2	0	0	2	2	0	4
Trades	12	23	0	17	9	28	22	32	19	44	79	78	7	19	18	16
Social Sciences	15	6	0	3	3	6	3	4	2	6	2	0	64	28	29	7
Arts & Humanities	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	16	7
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N-Counts	104	48	206	30	133	72	154	44	91	99	136	40	113	81	45	93

Note. Total N-Count = 1,489. A total of 772 individuals (30% of the respondents) are presently unemployed. Seventy-five percent of these people are either in the military, in school, or homemakers.

[a]Current occupational groups are defined in Table A-1.

[b]C indicates completed program.

[c]I indicates incompleted program.

[d]All numbers are in percentages except for the N-Counts at the bottom of the table.

TABLE 4

Percentage of Students From Educational Programs by Their First Job, Their Current Job, and Expected Future Job

Program completed	Occupational Group[a]																							
	Bus. contact			Nursing			Bus. detail			Technologies			Science			Trades			Soc. sciences			Arts & hum.		
	1st[b]	C[c]	F[d]	1st	C	F	1st	C	F	1st	C	F	1st	C	F	1st	C	F	1st	C	F	1st	C	F
Business & Marketing	54	51	60	1	1	1	24	27	13	4	0	1	0	0	0	12	9	5	5	12	19	0	0	1
Registered Nursing	1	0	0	99	100	99	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Accounting	11	14	22	1	1	1	72	72	64	2	0	1	1	0	0	12	10		1	3	5	0	0	0
Electrical Eng. Technology	6	9	12	0	0	0	4	2	3	63	61	68	0	0	1	27	25	12	0	1	3	0	1	1
Science	8	9	13	1	0	0	4	3	2	57	60	64	5	9	11	24	19	7	1	0	3	0	0	0
Auto Mechanics	3	8	17	0	0	0	8	9	6	1	3	5	0	0	0	87	80	6	1	0	7	0	0	1
Social Sciences	17	14	11	4	0	0	17	8	3	4	1	0	0	1	1	5	3	2	53	71	83	1	2	1
Arts & Humanities	12	14	16	3	0	3	17	8	2	2	5	10	0	0	3	19	11	2	22	36	36	15	16	28

Note. Percentages are based on students who completed or spent at least four months in a training program. N-counts varied from cell to cell within a program area because of missing data.

[a] Occupational groups are defined in Table A-1
[b] 1st indicates First Job
[c] C indicates Current Job
[d] F indicates Future Job

TABLE 4

Percentage of Students From Educational Programs by Their First Job, Their Current Job, and Expected Future Job

Program completed	Occupational Group[a]																							
	Bus. contact			Nursing			Bus. detail			Technologies			Science			Trades			Soc. sciences			Arts & hum.		
	1st[a]	C[b]	F[c]	1st	C	F	1st	C	F	1st	C	F	1st	C	F	1st	C	F	1st	C	F	1st	C	F
Business & Marketing	54	51	60	1	1	1	24	27	13	4	0	1	0	0	0	12	9	5	5	12	19	0	0	1
Registered Nursing	1	0	0	99	100	99	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Accounting	11	14	22	1	1	1	72	72	64	2	0	1	1	0	0	12	10	7	1	3	5	0	0	0
Electrical Eng. Technology	6	9	12	0	0	0	4	2	3	63	61	68	0	0	1	27	25	12	0	1	3	0	1	1
Science	8	9	13	1	0	0	4	3	2	57	60	64	5	9	11	24	19	7	1	0	3	0	0	0
Auto Mechanics	3	8	17	0	0	0	8	9	6	1	3	5	0	0	0	87	80	64	1	0	7	0	0	1
Social Sciences	17	14	11	4	0	0	17	8	3	4	1	0	0	1	1	5	3	2	53	71	83	1	2	1
Arts & Humanities	12	14	16	3	0	3	17	18	2	12	5	10	0	0	3	19	11	2	22	36	36	15	16	28

Note. Percentages are based on students who completed or spent at least four months in a training program. N-counts varied from cell to cell within a program area because of missing data.

[a] Occupational groups are defined in Table A-1
[b] 1st indicates First Job
[c] C indicates Current Job
[d] F indicates Future Job

TABLE 5

Could Those Employed in Occupations Related to Their Training Have Obtained Their Jobs Without Post-secondary Education?

Educational Program	No Response	No	Yes	Ratios No:Yes
Business & Management	2	34	33	1:1
Registered Nursing	4	212	6	35:1
Accounting	2	78	38	2:1
Electrical Engineering Technology	3	98	20	5:1
Science	4	27	6	5:1
Auto Mechanics	4	65	67	1:1
Social Sciences	6	80	9	9:1
Arts & Humanities	2	23	9	3:1
	27	617	188	

TABLE 6

Are Those in Occupations Related to Their Training Satisfied With Their Jobs and Would They Do It Over Again?

Educational program	Satisfaction: Very satisfied — Do over	Very satisfied — Not do over	Very satisfied — Not sure	Fairly satisfied — Do over	Fairly satisfied — Not do over	Fairly satisfied — Not sure	Fairly dissatisfied — Do over	Fairly dissatisfied — Not do over	Fairly dissatisfied — Not sure	Very dissatisfied — Do over	Very dissatisfied — Not do over	Very dissatisfied — Not sure	Total	N-Counts
Business & Management	33[a]	3	3	35	4	15	2	0	3	2	0	0	100	66
Registered Nursing	41	4	6	30	4	13	1	0	0	0	0	1	100	212
Accounting	32	2	7	41	3	9	2	0	1	1	0	0	100	116
Electrical Engineering Technology	32	4	5	36	4	11	5	0	1	2	0	0	100	115
Science	29	0	10	52	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	100	31
Auto Mechanics	36	2	2	43	2	9	2	2	1	1	0	0	100	122
Social Science	47	1	10	26	2	9	1	1	1	1	0	1	100	84
Arts & Humanities	34	6	0	36	6	3	3	3	3	3	0	3	100	35

Note. Total N-Count = 781

[a]All numbers are in percentages except N-Counts.

TABLE A-1

Educational Program Related to Current Occupational Group

Educational Program	Current Occupational Group
Business & Management	Business Contact: Promotion and Direct Contact Sales; Management and Planning; Retail Sales and Services
Registered Nursing	Nursing: Nursing and Human Care
Accounting	Business Detail: Paying, Receiving, and Bookkeeping; Clerical and Secretarial Work; Office Machine Operation; Dispatch and Delivery
Electrical Engineering Technology	Technologies: Engineering and Other Applied Technologies; Engineering; Repairing and Servicing Home and Office Equipment
Science	Science: Natural Sciences and Mathematics; Medicine and Medical Technologies
Auto Mechanics	Trades: Machine Operating, Servicing, & Repairing; Construction and Maintenance; Transport Equipment Operation; Growing and Caring for Plants/Animals
Social Sciences	Social Sciences: Social Sciences and Legal Services; Education and Social Services; Law Enforcement and Protective Services
Arts & Humanities	Arts & Humanities: Creative Arts; Applied Arts (Verbal); Applied Arts (Visual); Popular Entertainment